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ABSTRACT

Organizational development and planning, two methods currently employed to improve organizations, have a mutual objective -- organization improvement through systematic goal attainment. Organizational development strives to improve administrator behavior to facilitate interpersonal communication between those individuals responsible for the planning activities. Such administrator behavior facilitates a working relationship between those in decisionmaking positions, and maintains a communication process that correctly and efficiently transfers decisions from decisionmakers to decision implementers. (RA)

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ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT AND THE PLANNING INTERFACE

John C. Croft

Planning, Human Resources, and Accountability are rather pervasive themes in today's school organizations. All of these themes seem somehow to relate to organizational improvement or goal attainment in schools. One purpose of this paper is to discuss two means currently used to improve organizations--Organization Development and Planning. These are typically considered separately, but have the same general objective--that of organizational improvement through systematic goal attainment. Another purpose is to clarify the similarities and differences inherent in these two ways of thinking, and a third purpose is to provide some examples of the utility of Organization Development (OD) in a school system.

The Rise of OD as a Response to Change

Efforts at organizational improvement have a long history. Only recently, however, has serious thought been given to systematizing the conceptualization of efforts toward organizational improvement. Invariably such thought has led to the consideration of change.

Change

During recent years a dominant and reoccuring theme in most organizations has been the need to cope with the accelerating rate and scope of change, and schools in particular have become especially visible both in terms of public attitudes and in the writings of critics.

EA 003 891

One big change in schools has been the emergence of new technique and material resources for use by both teachers and administrators. Another change has been the shift in student and parent demands toward an educational system which satisfies more individual needs, and is characterized by a more personal-centered and less social-centered life style.

"Experiences-of-the-moment" have been given a greater priority of concern by the "now" generation than have questions of either past- or future-orientation. The major interest of today's generation is "Where it's at" not "Where we are going" or "What has led up to this situation". A third type of change in schools has been the rise of competitive educational programs and the availability of these alternatives to the students, making them no longer as captive as they were once analyzed to be . The organization of work in the school has also changed. Today the "in" thing is to be doing team-teaching, or working in an open-plan school, or some combination or idiosyncratic variation of these.

Important modifications have taken place in the relationship between the individual and the organization. Student-power advocates and teacher-power sympathizers are but a mere reflection of a stream of thought which includes individualized instruction, personalizing democracy, participative decision-making, doing your own thing, etc. All these terms suggest that people today are relating to organizations somewhat differently from the passive, submissive roles which workers once assumed, and this has precipitated a change in the relationship between the individual and the organization toward a more self-actualizing interest of the individual

and away from a strict meeting of organizational demands.

Non-developmental Responses to Change

In the midst of these changes in attitude and work organization, several "non-developmental" responses to change have become typical on the part of many people in school organizations. By "non-developmental" is meant a response which may temporarily shelve the situation at hand, but contains nothing which may help solve future situations. One such response has been to deny that such change is occurring. This is perhaps the least developmental response to change--to respond as though there has not been any. Under these circumstances, business as usual suggests that there is no need to invent or innovate. Present procedures and practices are as good as ever. This thinking is unrealistic in light of the commentary above.

A slightly more useful approach is to replace the defective parts or people. This solution can create a permanent undercurrent of anxiety in the organization, /(i.e. Who will be next?). A third non-developmental response to change is to work harder. While this seems to be a rather common administrative response, it is, after all, hardly more than self-preservational, and rarely brings new light to a problem. Another response is the gesture of making things more complex, perhaps by adding a new technique to use, a new person with whom to deal, a role to be clarified, or a new organizational structure to comprehend. Yet another is to manage by crisis--to attempt to predict where the next crisis will occur or to respond quickly and unthinkingly when it does occur. This may put out the fire but it rarely gets rid of the heat. Finally, another response is to consider the productivity or

response of a particular individual or group of people, quite apart from how they interrelate to other individuals or groups of people. Perhaps there is something about their own characteristics or attributes, alone, which could be modified to improve the whole situation.

All these are seen as "non-developmental" responses to change because they lead to little growth or organizational improvement. While some are more deadly than others, none of them impinge directly upon the network of relationships between people and people, between people and things, or between people and organizational structure. Norms (e.g. commonly and widely held beliefs about the ways things will be done and the ways people will relate while doing them) have been shown to be very powerful stabilizers and directors of work activity; and integrated systems of norms, sometimes called "climate," are not examined or facilitated within any of these approaches. Thus they are truly non-developmental.

"Developmental" Responses to Change

There are some more developmental responses to change which some of today's organizations have seen as viable and necessary to their further growth, development, and improvement. It is out of these developmental responses that most Organization Development (OD) has emerged and been refined.

One such response is to consider the organization, not the individual, as the client. The focus of analysis, planning, and work is more upon an individual within his network of norms and relationships than it is upon the individual alone. Another response is the involvement of the members of the organization themselves in assessing, diagnosing and

transforming their own situation, e.g. on self-analytic methods. Still another developmental response is the active use of reflexive methods wherein the participants themselves set goals, plan actions and collect feedback on the results of these actions. A fourth response is on "working the problem." That is, bringing to bear all the possible resources of the organization which are relevant to the problem the group is attempting to solve and deliberately organizing around that problem while commiting themselves to each other in a sincere effort to solve it.

Organization Development

OD is sometimes called Applied Behavioral Science. It relies strongly on concepts from the behavioral sciences. The main force for its relevance to organizations today as a very important "social technology" stems from some very practical dilemmas which face organizational rationalists.

There is the leadership dilemma. On the one hand, most people agree that organizations should be so designed that someone is responsible for supervising all essential activities. But on the other hand, many recognize that it is important that we create structures where leadership is shared.

There is the responsibility dilemma. Responsibility for specific acts should not be duplicated, but overlapping of responsibility provides rich opportunity for cross-training, back-up and emotional support on very complex decisions, while increasing in many instances the reliability of the decision itself.

There is the enrichment dilemma. Jobs should be simplified, but people seem to want to expand and enlarge their jobs and responsibilities so they can get excited about them. Responsibilities should be written, clear and understood, but individuals (especially professionals) should be given freedom and flexibility to develop their own potentials in the job.

There is the authority dilemma. People believe that the authority to make decisions should be commensurate with responsibility for those decisions. However we all know that authority can not be assigned but rather goes with the demonstrated ability and esteem that the individual has among associates.

Lastly, there is the accountability dilemma. It is assumed that predictability and accountability should be accomplished through impersonal and rational structures; yet real commitment, work and significant accountability occur only where there is a strong atmosphere of interpersonal trust and confidence.

There are some basic assumptions, orientations and values which are widely shared by OD specialists. One of these is an optimism about people--a fundamentally positive orientation to them and their potential. People are viewed as basically good; holding untapped potential for growth and learning; having the capacity to trust, to be more authentic with each other, to express feelings (as well as thoughts), to enrich their relationships with each other; and to become largely self-directing in their pursuit of organizational goals. The focus is on the creation of

organizational environments and conditions where these positive characteristics of people can be supported and developed. There is a belief that under these conditions the quality of life for individuals in that organization will be substantially improved and that in the long run productivity will also increase.

Another orientation of OD specialists is the understanding of and concern for the total organization, its dominant characteristics, the relationship among its component parts, and how all of the above relate to the individual. This orientation toward a "system organization " is strongly sought by OD specialists. Some aspects of this orientation manifest themselves in attempts to get at widespread, unstated assumptions, goals, and norms for behavior which affect the work of the organization; in the need to look at administrative decisions and how these are affecting people; in the need to recognize that individuals and units within the organization are organically related and that change in one part triggers change in another; and in the need for all members (not just the top administration or union) to become aware of those factors which make the organization work and function.

Another perspective of OD specialists is that people, themselves, are critical resources for OD. A wide range of talents and viewpoints, plus substantial amounts of energy and self-direction are vital to successful OD efforts. Specifically, everyone in the organization has relevant data, potential to learn, potential to participate in problem-solving situations; key administrators and leaders have the power and responsibility to lead in the inquiry about the functioning of the

organization and to learn how to create developmental environments and processes while modeling positive behavior for the rest of the organization to see.

OD activities have a problem-solving orientation, in keeping with the notion of a "system organization." Problem-solving cycles should lead to the development of new processes and mechanisms for coping with change; and each cycle should be related to important elements of the organization and lead naturally to subsequent problem-solving cycles dealing with other situations which have been identified. Some activities of a problem-solving model are:

(1) Diagnosis which is oriented to gathering data about underlying assumptions and behavioral norms which have guided operations and determined habitual responses to change.

(2) Planning which uses the diagnosis to create conditions for people to examine and work on their habitual responses to change.

(3) Action in which new responses to change are tried out by individuals and units emphasizing spontaneity and experimental attitudes rather than fixed approaches.

(4) Evaluation and Learning which features a spirit of inquiry about the results of actions taken, including the confirmation of strengths and successes and the internalization of new behaviors as well as the analysis of failures and weaknesses

in order to start a next diagnosis-planning-action-learning cycle.

(5) Recycling on new problems with the orientation toward extending the process to longer-term decisions and problems, rather than only dealing with immediate problems or crises.

With all these foci on human support and rewarding emphases, some conflict is apparent between being concerned for people and getting the job done. The attempt in OD is to strive for efficient solutions to this conflict by inventing norms, structures, and procedures that transcend the limitations of traditional organizational forms. One main idea is that task-centered structures, authority and working processes are emphasized. It is important to put power, responsibility and knowledge together around the task rather than around particular functions of roles or specialists, levels, or statuses in the organization. Another activity is the search for interdependence where greater task-relevant performance is seen as depending on more interdependent activity, where much of the important information to the problem is between people rather than in any one individual's head, and where a higher leverage on the problem task is needed. Individual initiative is supported by such processes, and collaboration is seen as a means of obtaining this freedom through mutual support, role performance, and joint risk-taking.

The Interface as an Aspect of Program Budgeting

Planning involves relating means to ends by formulating feasible courses of action through the systematic consideration of alternatives. Thus the notion of planning can also apply to settings where objectives and ends are not predetermined. It may be unilateral or participatory in nature. A difficulty emerges, however, when some involved person or collection of people designs the systematic techniques to be used in the planning, and thus becomes a little more "expert" than others who will plan with that person or who will execute that plan. Here lies the rub in systematic planning and especially in program budgeting procedures.

Definition of Interface

"Interface" is a jargon term, borrowed from the aerospace industry and related sciences, and used in the OD literature to describe one or more interactions. It most frequently refers to work-related interactions among groups of people. Any situation where two or more people or groups are interacting with a common purpose in mind can be considered to be an interface, and a typical OD mission might be to actually interface the groups, or to help them develop and strengthen an interface which already exists.

Interfacing as a Problem-Budgeting-Planning Problem

Planning involves two or more people relating to each other in order to achieve an objective. This interacting occurs during all phases of the planning; yet very little attention is given in the literature on Program Budgeting to aspects of interaction, except for

the common impression that the best analysis is carried out when there _is_ extensive interaction between the planning analyst and the decision maker. Interaction and the active participation of all levels of the organization are necessary, not only in the analytical aspect of the program budgetary process, but also in developmental and operational phases of a planning-programming-budgeting system.

Interaction and active participation however need to be facilitated and channeled. Otherwise there may occur (as an OD specialist would predict from his experience with interface problems) the very human phenomena of ignorance of the objectives of the situation or distortions of the expectations, perceptions and images of the other in the planning situation. Another result may be the emergence of slightly different or even directly contrary programs or solutions which, although very important to the person having them, may actually go unshared because of this intuitively perceived difference. In OD literature, these are commonly referred to as the "hidden" agenda.

The above phenomena are encountered frequently in interface situations which are work-related. They have a distinctly interpersonal texture and, indeed, many techniques have been designed by OD specialists to cope with them.

The point here is that although there is very little interest devoted to interface problems in the Program Budgeting literature, planning by someone or some group or department for or with someone

else is by definition an interface problem to which much OD literature and method could be applied.

The Nature of Sophisticated Information Systems

Many organizational theorists hold to the possibility that some day highly developed program budgeting systems will probably be able to perform many of the critical managerial functions in organizations. These systems will be complete with a detailed and sophisticated analysis which includes: (1) the definition of the objectives, (2) carefully designed programs to meet these objectives, (3) a thorough search for and identification of the resources required, and (4) the systematic evaluation of alternative programs for achieving these objectives. However, no matter what the likelihood of this occuring, all would agree that the realization of this possibility is a long way off.

Such sophisticated systems have useful properties which can influence the way the administrator makes decisions. First, they can help the administrator to order and understand the complexity of the present. Second, they provide him with an opportunity to experiment with different possible future states of his environment and to learn what might be the possible consequences for each state. Therefore, they may be used to increase the probability that his decision processes will produce a tolerable or enjoyable outcome. Thirdly, they are based upon the assumption (like all formal organization) that organizations and programs are rational and that all information and activities can be completely and comprehensively arranged to model a system that accurately reflects how individuals actually behave in the organization. The above includes the further assumption that structures can be constructed to

redirect this behavior where needed.

Some organizational theorists think that, because our society is so complex and interdependent, without the rationality made possible by sophisticated information systems there exists the risk of losing control over our everyday life and our destiny.

What is critically relevant to this paper is that sophisticated information systems have a definite impact on the people who use them. When an ordinary person interacts with a highly complex, comprehensive, and sophisticated collection of information in an attempt to solve a problem, the following reactions have often been found to emerge:

1. A feeling that there is a reduction in the psychological space of free movement (i.e., a constriction of the behavioral options available to the person).

    This can be very threatening to the potential user of the plan or system. As the program-budgeting process becomes more sophisticated and the use of information becomes more systematic and thorough, the here-to-fore informal aspects of organization become more and more explicit and hence more and more under the control of the more sophisticated planner or information specialist, and less the property of the user, who then feels himself becoming increasingly hemmed-in.

2. A sense of psychological failure which has been shown to occur as a result of someone else defining the individual's goals, his path to those goals, his level of aspiration, and his criteria for success.

    When this occurs, it could lead an administrator who aspires toward challenging work filled with uncertainty and requiring self-responsibility to frustration, while encouraging another who prefers less challenge and less responsibility to be satisfied.

3. The experiencing of a "double bind", or conflict between, on the one hand, the necessity to structure a continuous flow of information and people resources into the information

system and then letting the system make important decisions, and, on the other hand, the necessity to make some pressing decisions himself, and in the process of doing so, altering the system.

> If he "plays the system" in order to "beat it", he succeeds as an administrator, but fails as a human being. He feels guilty if he refuses to obey but he damns himself if he does obey.

4. More and more, the emphasis lies on the desire for relevant information and competence with the problem, rather than on organizational power or position.

> Whenever the focus is on what is being done and how it is being done, and all possible information related to that objective is being collected, it becomes less necessary for a given person to control the responses of others in order to guarantee that his solution becomes the system's solution. Thus as all people become encouraged to offer valid and complete information about an extensive and complex problem, the previously "short, sweet, and efficent" solution becomes one that is carefully examined, widely shared, and agonizingly revised on the tenuous and ambiguous way to a creative solution.

5. Fewer feelings of essentiality as the information system becomes more sophisticated and more able to handle greater ambiguity and complexity.

> Success is quite frequently felt and measured from selecting an admittedly ambiguous course of action and making it come to reality by "pouring on" a lot of resources, human energy, and personal charisma. However, with better program-budgeting systems uncertainty is diminished and more complex decisions become programmable and thus less receptive to influence by the administrator.

6. The lesser need for competition and advocacy within the organization between individual and individual, the individual and the group, and groups and groups.

> Where competition is valued and advocacy is emphasized, the typical result is more commitment and stronger identity within the work unit, with a tendency to "close ranks" and develop perceptions of the other units which are far from reality. When these aspects of commitment, strong identity and distorted perceptions of the other units occur, there is a tendency to develop a protective cohesion and consequently to share only partial information: that which is "right" from the point of view of the person or group who is sharing it,

rather than from the perspective of how it is related to the objective of the plan.

7. A greater need to think conceptually.

   If the information system which culminates in the program budget becomes sophisticated enough so that it can handle a richer set of facts and can efficiently summarize and present past as well as present experience (with all available alternatives fully considered), explicitness and competence become more important than fuzziness and power. Also, it becomes less useful to get overly concerned about detail.

Human Phenomena Which Complicate the Effective Use of Program-Budgeting-Systems

The Conflicts Among Personal Value Priorities

We do not live in an age which could be characterized as the age of faith, or of enlightenment, or of reason. We live in an age of confrontation. The main purpose of people and groups in this age is to "not let the other kid himself" when they are interacting. It seems less important to identify a mutual problem than it is to be against what another is for; or more simply, to offer a contrary perception of the situation. Invariably when these confrontations are exposed, they stem from conflicts in values. The one party puts a different priority on certain activities, events and outcomes than does the other. There is little in this currently acceptable ethic of confrontation which fosters or encourages the strong mutual collaboration necessary for effective planning.

The Consideration of Program-Budgeting Procedures as "Technique"

It is not enough to say, for example, that students will not be treated as numbers, or that if there is no preferred or palatable alternative available, a current planning procedure must be repeated. The neat conceptual package of a completed program analysis yields no impression of the relevance of technique, procedures, or more generally, the perceived or assumed utility of this system. Planning models will not solve the problem, the people will--if they have a mutual commitment and excitement about the people with whom they interact, and are able to develop a common frame of reference while remaining concerned about the problem itself.

The Problem of Accountability

By whom and to whom is a person accountable; and does it matter which methods are used to account for differences in the achievement of personal objectives, as long as these levels of achievement can be clearly demonstrated? Isn't it more helpful to be accountable with someone else, where you are jointly setting mutual objectives, etc. etc.?

The Existence of Expressive, as well as Instrumental Objectives

In systematic and effective program-budgeting, an agreed-upon goal should be unambiguous and should be supported by a great degree of consensus upon the ways to measure it. However, while people may behave with a strong sense of purpose, they rarely think and talk in this same manner. More commonly, they describe objectives as feelings or experiences they wish to have, not concrete specifics they

wish to achieve. This type of response tells more about the individual himself than about the clarity or feasibility of a goal.

The Role of Administrators and Supervisors

The administrator must carefully conceptualize his role. He must be aware of the subtle nuances in supervising and working with others, in order to facilitate the interface of program-budgeting. The process of effective planning leads to considerable interpersonal interaction.

People in organizations find themselves in a number of interpersonal situations in which they may be:

(a) attempting to communicate a decision to another person (a First Party situation);

(b) trying to clarify the expectations held for them by another person (a Second Party situation);

(c) making a joint decision with other people about what will be done or on what terms they will relate to each other (a Problem-Solving situation); or

(d) facilitating the working relationships between people who are in conditions (a), (b), or (c) above (a Third Party situation).

The human context of leadership in an organization is very complex. Thus none of these conditions is necessarily exclusive or inclusive of the other three. In addition, the other person(s) involved in any given interaction may have a different subjective definition of the situation. Even in those situations which are clearly understood and agreed upon by all persons, each individual may have very different thresholds or tolerances for several issues which seem to be present in the making of a decision; for example, the short-range or long-range outcomes of the decision, the certainty or uncertainty of the

results of the decision, and the concern for the impact of the decision on self or on others not central to self or the organization. Organizational, societal and interpersonal events of today are replete with examples of communication strain and crises in relationships which are starkly and boldly accentuated by great variations in these personal and individual thresholds.

The basic problem for the administrator is that modes of behavior and plans or strategies for working under conditions (c) and (d) are not like those for working under conditions (a) and (b). Moreover, even if the administrator is clear about which condition is operative and has the degree of skill necessary for working in that condition, other persons in the situation may not have this clarity of condition and degree of skill. And so the confusion mounts.

In any situation, a person may argue from his own position and not identify alternatives, or may remain closed about his own intentions, expectations or goals. Both of these behaviors are quite appropriate under conditions (a) and (b), but not under conditions (c) and (d) where most of the human difficulties arise. The accurate identification of the images and expectations of all persons in a situation is very important to the achievement of an adequate decision under conditions (c) and (d). In the simplest analysis of the problem, people may have different images or expectations (mixed-motives), or they may have similar images and expectations. Too frequently there is very limited skill among

participants for effectively sharing these images and expectations under decision conditions (c) and (d), or these images and expectations may be wittingly or unwittingly held back.

Whatever, they are typically tacit and thus unequally understood by the participants involved in the situation. If shared at all, they tend to be used as the half-brick of Stephen Leacock: "A half-truth is like a half a brick, it carries better in an argument." Sometimes the goal becomes to cooperate, no matter what the issue or decision or personal perspective on it, thus producing an over-conformity not conducive to the solving of the problem at hand. At other times persons may engage in "suspicious behavior" where they try to second-guess the expectation of the leader or other influential person, particularly when he has not readily shared his images and expectations in the hope that others would work on theirs.

Thus, the trend towards program budgeting will intensify the necessity for more sophisticated administrative behaviors under conditions (c) and (d). Increasingly, all the relevant information is between two or more people rather than within the mind or control of any one person. The skill of the administrator as an effective problem-solver and third party has a profound impact on the effectiveness of the program budgeting in the organization.

A Case Example of the Use of Organization Development Upon the Interface Aspects of Planning: Financial Planning and Decision Making in the York County School District

(Reported through the assistance of Philip Lawrence
OD Consultant, York County Board of Education)

Genesis

The York County Board of Education was formed, as were most other county boards in Ontario, from a collection of smaller boards. The result was an "organization" which had all the classic behaviours and attitudes of any large-scale merger: mutual suspicion, cries for autonomy, generalized hostility to the head office, competition for resources, and a collection of principals who were clustered in groups that were somewhat isolated from each other and from the total system.

In this situation, the basic problem was, how to facilitate the critical interfaces for effective planning and decision-making. After careful consideration, the York County Board of Education decided to employ an Organization Development strategy which would strive to change the atmosphere or "culture" of the organization so that there could be a better use of the resources of the organization, particularly the human resources. The Board decided that they would use part of their professional development budget for this project, and that the money spent on professional development should be devoted to some considerable extent to those key people who were in leadership roles, i.e., principals and their superiors.

Team Building

A large 4-day, team-building meeting was held in August at the end of the first full year of operation of the County unit. This meeting was initiated by the principals with the blessing of the senior administration. A group of three OD Consultants was brought in because it was felt that its expertise would be helpful in making the meeting more successful. The organizers of this meeting were careful to advise all prospective participants that attendance at this workshop was to be completely voluntary and consequently, some administrators chose not to come. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that some of the participants wanted nothing to do with the OD Consultants, and that some administrators were at least ambivalent about the sessions. Thus, when the meetings began, the people were in many cases confused and somewhat resentful. Some perceived themselves as being at the meeting only because they did not dare to offend the Director and their superintendents and some feared that the OD Consultants would play dangerous psychological games with them. Others seemed unsure of why they were there or what might happen.

This Workshop began with a Confrontation Meeting based upon a design developed by Richard Beckhard, (Harvard Business Review, March 1967). The purpose of this particular confrontation meeting was to provide the Director with an opportunity to (1) get out into the open for the first time before the total management team the organizational problems and attitudes with which he was particularly concerned, (2) to make clear to the total group that he was personally concerned, (3) to get from the others and share with the others the above information, (4) to arrange these items in some order of priority, and (5) to have

the whole group begin to deal with these important issues and set target dates for their completion.

Not only were these things done, but the Director and his administrative council agreed to come up with answers to a number of challenging questions before the end of the conference and they even went so far as to hold a first meeting on these issues in the presence of their subordinates.

Obviously, this was, and could be, only a beginning. But it was the beginning of talking openly about things that were being talked about furtively and, what is more important, it was a beginning in dealing with these issues jointly.

By the end of the workshop, many of the resentments, confusions and suspicions were alleviated, the principals had got much better acquainted, a much greater feeling of teamness had developed, and everyone had at least a better idea of the direction in which York County was going and how they were involved in this movement. They also began to develop the differential perceptions that they, as individuals, were not helpless victims of circumstances and of powerful others, and began to realize that they could each make a difference--that to some degree they could influence their complex, organizational world.

In addition to this initial meeting and subsequent day-long quarterly meetings, the OD Consultants conducted an Organizational

Development Laboratory for all the top administrators, both business and academic, as well as for all secondary principals and vice-principals and about half of all the elementary principals. This was a two-week residential program run one week at a time with from six weeks to six months between. The OD lab was created by Robert B. Morton, management psychologist, and modified for York County by Morton and the OD Consultants. It was designed to give the participants a common understanding of the realities of an organization and to provide them with a common language and a common methodology for dealing with organizational issues. Since the participants work in functional groups of eight to ten, (for example, a senior superintendent, a business officer, some of that superintendent's principals and, perhaps, a staff person), the lab was designed to develop better communication channels, both vertically and horizontally within the organization.

The trustees of the York County Board of Education were interested in and concerned about the OD program. Some of the trustees expressed an interest in OD training as a means of improving their own effectiveness. They also realized that it is very difficult to truly comprehend OD from the "outside", i.e. by reading about it, talking about it, or listening to reports about it. Therefore, fifteen of the eighteen trustees made the sacrifice of time, energy and business and personal inconvenience to attend all or part of a Morton OD Laboratory for trustees and their top administrative team.

The Consequences

There have been four major results for the above described efforts:

(1) The development of a York County identity;

(2) The development of a relatively distortion-free vertical channel of communication for planning and decision-making;

(3) The development of a horizontal pattern for planning, problem-solving, and conflict resolution;

(4) Job enrichment.

The Development of a York County Identity

By working together on issues that were controversial and important to all concerned, the administration of York County has become much more of a team. Before the 4-day meeting and its sixty-odd hours of intensive work, there was much less feeling of unity and common purpose. Instead, there was, among other things, a residual loyalty to organizations which no longer existed and an identification with their well-known practices and policies. Some individual "empires" had been lost in the shuffle, leaving their previous rulers somewhat confused and rueful. There was also quite a strong elementary-secondary division which made cooperation difficult. Now, York County is perceived as much more of an entity wherein each principal better understands how the goals of his school fit in with the goals of the organization. There is now a much greater understanding of policy and other major plans because the principals have helped to shape them, and for this reason, the whole organization is more committed to the achievement of the plans--there is more of a feeling of "ownership" which simply was not there before. There is more resolution of conflict now by the members who have the

conflict rather than a kicking of the problem upstairs. For example, two neighbouring high school principals met recently and resolved their conflicts over budget resources. This was initiated by them, resolved by them, was done quickly and amicably, and saved the area a substantial amount of money.

A Distortion-Free, Two-Way Vertical Channel of Communication

Prior to the OD training, the communication in York County was similar to the kinds of communication we see when we visit other organizations. Meetings were dominanted by fear, by status, the boss heard what the subordinates wanted him to hear, disagreements were disguised, difficulties were denied, buried or thrown over the fence into the other fellow's yard, decisions were made on bad data and no one disagreed with the boss even when they knew he was wrong. Also, because the groups had no way of systematically dealing with such issues, the work groups were ineffective, agenda items sprang up in ever proliferating profusion, returned with monotonous regularity and people were more than a little frustrated.

Subsequent to the training, while there are some ineffective behaviors, there is a definite progress away from this. It is now much closer to a situation where anyone who has the data is welcome to make an input into the discussion. Opinions are more freely expressed in a much more open and supportive atmosphere. Thus, decisions are based on better and more complete data and the quality of the decisions is much higher. Furthermore, because everyone has been involved in ways that are relevant to the issue and to his area of accountability, there is greater

commitment to make the decision work. That is, the top administration can communicate to the organization in a clearer fashion and they can receive feedback from the firing line. The communication both ways is remarkably free of status distortions and other disfunctional impedimenta.

For example, the administrative committee has succeeded in cutting their regular agenda from over thirty items to about five. They have reduced the length of their meetings; the climate of the meetings is much more relaxed but much more gets done. Furthermore, the last half hour or so of every meeting is devoted to systematically examining how the meeting has gone and to the consideration of what can be done to make the next meeting more effective. This time is perceived as very well spent, and the members of the committee have little inclination to leave this learning session out "for lack of time".

At the last quarterly meeting with the principals a decision was presented to the group that had been roughed out at the previous meeting. It was accepted very quickly and has been easily implemented. Another tentative proposal was made to the meeting which the top administration thought was simple and routine. That proposal was completely altered for the better and the criticisms and recommendations were freely given and received. One final but significant example: when the time came for the morning coffee break, everyone was eager to go, because it had been a busy session. When the Director finally dismissed the group they responded with some considerable enthusiasm. But as they were rising to leave a junior principal said, "Just a minute! I have something

to say about this last item that I think is important." Without any hesitation or double takes, the entire group sat down and listened while this junior member made a highly valid point. He received support from the Director and acceptance from the whole group.

Job Enrichment

As time came for planning the budget, a number of administrators began to involve subordinates in the planning who had not been previously involved. The superiors found that their subordinates had all kinds of highly relevant data at their fingertips which the superiors had never considered before. Consequently, better decisions were made and money was saved. For example, one area superintendent used his area supervising caretaker in the maintenance budget planning. That is, the caretaker actually participated in the planning in his own area of accountability rather than submitting a report or a set of requisitions to his bosses. Consequently, a much better maintenance budget was produced in very short order and there has been a saving of $2,600 in grass cutting alone. The superiors were amazed at the quantity and quality of data which the caretaker had. This sort of task-relevant involvement of people has been repeated in other areas, in schools and so on. Almost without exception, the results have been better, in quality of decision and degree of commitment and execution.

Related Learnings

The results of the OD programs are just beginning to emerge (as of June, 1971) and the prediction is that things will get much better in the following years. In the process, a number of organizational

myths have been exploded as illustrated below:

"Involvement is a GOOD THING -- if you get everybody involved, they will feel good and will work harder." We have learned that you involve just the people who have the relevant data and the people who are working in their area of accountability. You might also involve someone for his information if he needs to know, not only the decision but the thinking behind the decision. Involvement of any others is likely to be a squandering of organizational resources to little or no purpose.

"A camel is a horse designed by a committee." We have learned that a camel is a horse organized by an ineffective committee.

"If we only had enough money we could solve the problem." We have learned that this is simply a justification for not confronting our own ineffective use of the resources we already have. We have found that we can locate and use these resources and get the job done when people work in an open and collaborative way.

"Collaboration means that everyone has to agree." We have learned that collaboration is the resolution of disparate points of view--that the greater the variety of opinions there is in a group, the higher the quality of the decision. But only if the members of the committee have the fortitude to expose their differences, the honesty and good will to listen to each other, and the skill to resolve the disparities which exist in relation to a common goal.

"If you want to get a good job done, you have to bring in 'competent' people and get rid of the deadwood." What we have learned is that virtually everyone is competent once they have been freed to display their competence. We have learned that all the competent people we need already work for us.

"We all know what we are doing in this meeting, we all know what our goal is, and we all know what we have agreed to." We have discovered that these are perhaps the most pervasive and disfunctional myths in the cosmology of group work. It has been our experience that groups rarely know what they are doing in a meeting, but often think they know. A trained group has developed a methodology for finding out what they are actually doing, as distinct from what they think they are doing, and this skill enormously increases their working effectiveness. They also have a way of fixing on a common goal because one of the first things they learn in their training sessions is that the agenda does not define the goal. What the agenda does do is give a kind of fuzzy directionality to the proceedings. But unless this directionality is examined in detail and discussed, the people at the meeting will get their own interpretation of what the subject is and they talk about and agree to what they think is being dealt with but, in effect, everyone is talking about something different. Thus, they do not know what they have agreed to. The more general the phrasing of the agenda item or the more abstractly it is stated, the greater the potential for this kind of individualistic goal listortion.

Many people have gone to a meeting where a decision is reached on some procedural matter, only to discover a few days later that the "agreement" is being implemented in a whole variety of undiscussed ways. As a result, it is common to hear people say things like, "I told you so. Those guys always foul up," or "You see, group decision making is for the birds!"

In conclusion, we wish to discuss two important generalizations about OD.

1. It is extremely difficult to get a really solid grasp of what OD is all about until you experience it yourself. OD, both in training and in practice, is experiential learning about our own (and others') behavior in work groups, and most of us are not accustomed to learning in this way. We are much more accustomed to having learning conveyed to us from another, through talk, reading, or in some other way. Essentially, the facts, (which are rarely or never about our behavior) are given to us by someone and we think about them and arrange them in some sort of cognitive pattern. We might use these cognitive packages to modify our own behavior, but we think of that as something rather separate from the learning.

Essentially, what OD provides is a methodology for learning how to learn from your experience (rather than some expert's experience) so that you can learn how to behave more effectively on the job. Since you want the payoff from your learning to show up on the job, you do your learning in that context where the payoff is immediate. So, you have an experience, you collect your own facts about the experience,

you wring from this such learning as you can and then, if possible, you apply your learning to behave more effectively on the job. The learning is immediate, methodical, and behavior-centered--it is neither remote, abstract nor academic.

2. A related idea is that it is quite impossible to teach anybody anything of importance. The best we can do is to provide a situation in which someone may learn. And the best way to do that, in terms of organizational learning or organizational change, is to give people an opportunity to see a disparity between where they are now and where they want to be, and to guarantee that they will not be punished for attempting to get to where they want to be. Under these circumstances, the potential for learning is very high and the learners will find a way to their goal that is meaningful to them and thus, more likely to be effective.

What this means in organizational terms is that it is impossible to "sell" OD as a sort of package, remedy, or aid-in-time-of-trouble unless it makes sense to the people concerned, i.e. unless they perceive a disparity between what they are doing and what they want to do. For example, about fifteen months ago, the York County Administrative Council was given a set of sound and well-tested procedures for improving their meetings. They made a perfunctory attempt to use the prescription, but dropped it after several time-grudging attempts to make it work. At an OD lab about four months ago, after much hard and creative labour, they produced their own set of procedures and have used them very effectively to improve their meetings. The two

packages are virtually identical but only the one they produced themselves, to deal with their perceived need, was of any use to the council.

No outsider or expert can give viable learnings or solutions to the people in an organization. There are mountains of data to support this truth and multitudes of organizations which ignore it. However, if the people on the firing line can see a meaningful disparity, and if they expect that they can deal with it, they will create their own way. The significant problems of an organization can only be solved from the inside.

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